

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
4 January 1986

Marcos, Aquino draw large campaign crowds

] - By FERNANDO DEL MUNDO

LUCENA, Philippines

President Ferdinand Marcos again denied any role in the murder of Benigno Aquino Saturday and accused the opposition leader of helping to organize the communist insurgency threatening his regime.

Marcos -- campaigning against Aquino's wife, Corazon, who is opposing him in the Philippine's early presidential election Feb. 7 - told the largest crowd of his campaign that he had no role in Aquino's slaying.

As both candidates campaigned, the Philippine election commission heard arguments against using a sophisticated satellite-linked computer system to tabulate the Feb. 7 vote.

Marcos, 68, who called the vote 16 months ahead of schedule in the face of criticism in Washington of his handling of the growing guerrilla insurgency, went by helicopter and motorcade to San Pablo and then to Lucena, the provincial capital of Quezon.

A crowd of 12,000 -- the biggest in Marcos' five campaign trips outside the capital -- turned out at a rally at the Marcos Sports Stadium in Lucena.

Aquino, meanwhile, shifted her campaign to the home turf of first lady Imelda Marcos, and also drew large crowds. On Leyte island in the central Philippines, thousands of supporters lined the streets of the provincial capital of Tacloban.

At nightfall, 15,000 cheering supporters packed a downtown square to hear Aquino declare "your presence here is an indication that Leyte is no longer an Imelda country."

As Marcos did in his trip last week to Olongapo, he hit the same provinces Aquino where Aquino had campaigned earlier in the week. In his campaign swing, Marcos referred again to the charges against Benigno Aquino.

"The question is always raised why my opponent stands up on a stage and asks for pity and sympathy because her husband was arrested under martial law," he told a crowd in San Pablo.

"They say Aquino was fighting for justice and democracy so that was why he was arrested. Is this true? That is a lie," he said.

Charging Benigno Aquino with helping to organize the communist insurgency, Marcos said he approved of the death sentence meted out to Aquino after his 1977 conviction by a military court of ordering the murder of a local official, helping to establish the Communist Party, illegal Possession of firearms.

Marcos commuted Aquino's death sentence and later permitted him to go abroad for medical treatment. In Aquino's absence the death sentence against him was reaffirmed.

'So if there was this death sentence, if I had wanted to eliminate Aquino, if the military (wanted) to eliminate Aquino, we could have waited to execute him legitimately,' he said.

Aquino was slain on Aug. 21, 1983, at Manila Airport on his return to the Philippines from three years of self-imposed exile in the United States. A special court recently upheld the government's theory that he was shot by a communist-hired assassin.

Aquino has said that if she is elected, she might put Marcos on trial for her husband's murder.

If she wins, Aquino 'is going to order my arrest because she says bullet for bullet, life for life, imprisonment for imprisonment,' Marcos said.

As Aquino campaigned, her backers appealed to the Commission on Elections to abandon its ambitious plan to use computers to tabulate votes.

The election commission has announced plans to install 300 computers nationwide and link them to by satellite to collect results within 36 hours of the closing of the polls.

Aquino's supporters said fraudulent data could be pre-programmed or election returns changed on entry into the system.

At a five-hour open forum Saturday, several of the country's leading computer specialists said technical limitations on the system made it impossible to safeguard the proposed \$2.2 million network from manipulation.

One consultant, Manuel Alcuaz, said the satellite system might give the Central Intelligence Agency a chance to tamper with the returns.

'It might destroy the results of the people's mandate,' said Raul Gonzales, counsel for Aquino's party.